

## Discovering a Father who Delights in Us

11 August 2019

Reading: Luke 12:32-40

Loving God please open the Scriptures to us in a new and exciting way,  
In Jesus name we ask it.

At the end of my first year at university I got a job on a farm in the backblocks of South Canterbury. It was very marginal land and the two brothers who owned the farm gave me the job of spraying the gorse with 245T. I was a bit apprehensive spraying Agent Orange around, so I rang the Health Department. As long as you aren't pregnant you will be fine, they told me. I was pretty confident that I wasn't pregnant so off I went. I think it might have stunted my growth though!

Now I was blessed with two parents that loved me and who loved each other. With so much love around you would think I didn't need to hear it - but I did. Dad had the job of ringing me with my first year Uni results. "You have done well," Dad said, "we are proud of you." That was it – that was what I needed to hear. My father delighting in me.

One of my favourite verses in all of Scripture begins the Gospel for today. "Do not be afraid little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. Have you ever thought of God the Father delighting, taking pleasure and enjoying you? Have you ever thought of God simply loving you, being proud of you for who you are? Scripture repeats this delight that God has in us over and over again. But we find it so hard and so necessary to hear it.

Beginning to understand that we have a loving God who delights in giving us the very best is at the heart of the religious revolution that Jesus started. Jesus called his God Abba which isn't a Swedish singing group, rather it's the Aramaic word for Daddy. It's the most intimate way of a child speaking to their father. For the Jews of Jesus' day, God was in the temple and could only be approached by a select few on a select day. A common address to God was 'Sovereign of the Universe'. And yet Jesus dares to call God Abba. It's this Abba God that Jesus teaches us to pray to in the Lord's Prayer.

When we read the Bible, it is easy to hear critical voices: we should do this, or we should be that. But hear these words of God to you: "It is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom." Notice the word is "give". We don't have to earn the kingdom it is God's gift to us.

Whether you had loving parents or nasty parents or maybe you don't even know who they are, whether your parents said encouraging things or the reverse, we all need to hear that God delights in us and it is the Father's good pleasure to give us all we need.

Dad was good to me (we had our moments to be sure) and he must have said he was proud of me other times but I never heard it until that phone call on a 245T soaked farm.

Do not be afraid the verse begins. As you come to church today, I wonder what you are afraid of? Maybe you are facing ill health, maybe the loss of a dream or loved ones, maybe you fear that with lower interest rates that your savings aren't going to be enough.

This simple phrase "do not be afraid" occurs no less than 365 times in the Bible. For homework you can see if I'm right. Count them up and report back next week. 365 is also the number of something else? I think it occurs that often because we need reminding everyday not to be afraid.

When we can begin to grasp the delight that God has for us it has this uncanny way of driving out fear. Paul tells us that perfect love casts out all fear. The opposite of fear is love because when we know we are truly loved and held and cherished by God then we can face our fears.

On a cold winter's night, a man suffered a heart attack. After being admitted to hospital he asked the nurse to call his daughter. He explained, "You see, I live alone, and she is the only family I have." The nurse went to phone the daughter. The daughter was very upset and shouted, "Don't let him die till I get there. We had the most terrible argument almost a year ago and I haven't seen him since." The last thing I said to him was that I hate him. I'm coming. Just keep him alive."

Soon after the call the patient went into cardiac arrest. The nurse prayed, "O God his daughter is coming, don't let it end this way." However, all the efforts of the medical team to revive him were fruitless. The nurse saw a doctor talking to the daughter outside. The nurse went to her. "I'm sorry," said the daughter, "I never hated him, you know. I loved him. Can I go and see him?" The nurse took her in to see her dead father. The daughter, distraught, buried her face in the sheets. But then the nurse saw a scrap of paper on the bedside cabinet. So, she picked it up and read the note: "My dearest Janie, I forgive you. I ask you to forgive me. I know that you love me. I love you too." It was signed 'Daddy'.

Today we have a scrap of paper addressed to each one of us. We call that scrap of paper Luke's Gospel and written to us is this message we all long and need to hear. "Do not be afraid. It's your father, your heavenly daddy, who delights in you, who loves you, who rejoices in you, who is proud of you, who forgives you. It is the father's good pleasure to give you all you need."